

**Remarks at a Democratic
Congressional Campaign Committee
Dinner in Brentwood, California**

September 23, 2000

The President. Thank you.

Audience member. Four more years!
[Laughter]

The President. That's one song we won't sing tonight. [Laughter] Wow. Well, first, let me thank Michael and Jena and everyone who brought us all together for a perfectly wonderful evening. I think you've actually had a good time. I hope you have. I have.

And my friend David Foster, thank you for putting together that show. It was wonderful. I love Richard Marx's songs. I'm glad I got to hear Kayla. Nita was stunning. Jessica took my breath away. Those of you who love opera know there's no 19-year-old in the world who has an opera voice like that, anywhere. She's amazing.

I love the band. I like the sax player over here. [Laughter] I don't know that I like that Christian Slater can also sing and that Rob Lowe plays saxophone better than me. I don't think I like that. [Laughter] But we all had a lot of laughs tonight. And I'm grateful for what has been said and for the songs that have been sung.

But I'm especially—I'm just grateful to be here on behalf of my friend Dick Gephardt. He and Jane have been friends of Hillary's and mine a long time—and Charlie Rangel, Bob Matsui, Henry Waxman. Brad Sherman is here. I think Javier Becerra is here. Patrick Kennedy, thank you for doing such a good job. I know we've got Jane Harman, Mike Honda, Adam Schiff, Janice Nelson, and Gerrie Schipske here, at least those candidates, maybe some more.

I want to just talk to you—I won't take long tonight. But I want to ask you to do something besides give your money. So you have to listen a little bit.

You might ask yourself why, in the last year of my Presidency, when things are going so well, I would do what is now 138 events. And you might say, "Well, maybe he did a few for Hillary. He had to do that, but why did he do the others?" [Laughter]

And I told somebody the other day, this is a strange time in my life. It's the first time

in 26 years I haven't been on the ballot. My party has a new leader. My family has a new candidate. I'm kind of trading in the title of Commander in Chief for Cheerleader in Chief. [Laughter] But I like it. I like it because the whole essence of freedom and democracy is that nobody is indispensable, but the principles and the ideals and the energy and the vision of the vast masses of people, that is indispensable.

I'm doing this partly because we lost the majority because of what the Democrats were willing to do for you in '93 and '94, and the members of the other party wouldn't help them. When we adopted the economic plan and not a one of them would vote for it, they said we were raising taxes on people we weren't raising taxes on. They said we were going to break the economy and drive up unemployment and explode the deficit. And we did it in late '93. And in '94, when the voters were voting, they didn't yet know whether it would work or not.

We adopted a crime bill in '94, after we passed the Brady bill in '93 requiring handgun owners to do background checks. Then we adopted a crime bill to put 100,000 police on the street and banned assault weapons. And the NRA said we were going to interfere with the hunters. And we didn't adopt the crime bill until '94, and so when the people voted, it was—they didn't know whether they were telling the truth or not.

We tried to provide health care to all Americans. Like Harry Truman and Jimmy Carter and Richard Nixon before us, everybody who ever tried it, we got beat. We got further, actually, even than Harry Truman did, and we didn't lose quite as many seats as he did for exactly the same reason.

And I've had to listen to 8 years of misrepresentation now about what we proposed. But the people that wanted it were disappointed they didn't get it. And the people that thought it was a bad deal were inflamed. And all those things happened, and we lost the majority in the House of Representatives and the Senate in '94—because they did what was right for America.

And we've gone from a \$290 billion deficit to a \$250 billion surplus because they were willing to lay down their majority. And there were good people who gave up their careers

in Congress to turn this country around. There were good people—at least a dozen of them who lost their seats because they came from rural districts, where a lot of people had hunting licenses, and the hunters were told that their Congressman had voted to interfere with their right to go into the woods and hunt. There was nothing true about it. But the voters didn't know, and they were in a bad frame of mind. Turnout was low, and we lost a dozen Members because the NRA told the people—falsely—that the Brady bill and the assault weapons ban were somehow designed to interfere with them.

Well, it's different now. They know that the economic plan works. We've kept interest rates down and gave the country a different future. The crime rate has dropped for 8 years in a row, a 27-year low, a 35 percent drop in gun crime, and nobody has missed a day in the deer woods. *[Laughter]* It's different now.

And so part of me wants to do this because they took the bullets for what I asked them to do to make America a better place. And they had to run in 1994, and I didn't. I had until 1996. By '96, everybody said, "You know, this thing is rocking along pretty good here. We might not want to mess it up." But they paid.

Even more important, they ought to be in the majority because of the future. And that's the last thing I want to say. In 1996 we didn't win a couple of seats because people from California didn't vote when the people on the East Coast called the election for me. So a lot of people said, "Well, that's over; I won't go vote."

What I want to say to you tonight is that—I just want to echo what Dick said. In my lifetime, which, unfortunately, is now more than a half century, and most days I'm okay about that, too—*[laughter]*—but in my lifetime we have never had, at once, this economic prosperity, social progress, and the absence of domestic crisis or external threat.

Therefore, we have never had as much of an opportunity to build the future of our dreams for our children. And the real reason they ought to be in the majority is not that they were wrongly kicked out in '94, under the most adverse possible circumstances, can make it possible for me to sleep easier at

night when I leave the White House, knowing that we helped to bring them back. It's because it's the right thing for America's future.

Let me tell you what—we could actually in the next few years end child poverty in America. We could actually provide a world-class education to all the kids that live in this country. We actually know how to do it now. I've been working at this for 22 years, and when Hillary and I started out doing all of this school reform, we thought we knew what to do, but nobody really knew. Now we know.

I was at a school in Harlem the other day, a grade school, where 2 years ago 80 percent of the children were reading and doing math below grade level, and 2 years later, 74 percent of the children are doing reading and math at or above grade level—in 2 years. This can be done everywhere. This is not rocket science. We know how to do it now. Our plan will do it.

But they need small classes and modern schools and trained teachers and the Internet hookups, and they need high standards. And then the schools that aren't cutting it need to be identified and turned around or put under different management. It's not rocket science. We know how to do this now, but we have to decide whether we're going to do it.

We can make America the safest big country in the world, but we have to decide to do it. We can reverse this global warming—if you've got little kids, you better care a lot about this—and continue to grow the economy. But we have to decide to do it.

And my only worry here is that things are going so well, people may just sort of sidle through the election, thinking there are no real consequences, not understanding the choices on health care and education and the economy and the way we relate to the rest of the world. On arms control, for example, huge differences between the two parties.

So here's what I want to ask you to do. I thank you for your money. I thank you for the money you've given to Al and Joe and the Democratic Party. I thank you for the money you've given to the House. Many of you have given to the Senate candidates. A lot of you have given to Hillary. If you

haven't, I hope you will. [Laughter] I thank you for all that.

But remember, every one of you, every day, comes in contact with tons of people who have never been to one of these events, who never will go, don't know anybody in public life, but on election day they will go vote. And I would like to ask you to do something you probably have never thought of doing, which is to take some time every day between now and the election to bring this election up to somebody you know or you come in contact with and tell them why you came here tonight, why you forked over the money, why you know Dick Gephardt ought to be Speaker, why you're trying to help us win the Senate, why Al Gore and Joe Lieberman should be elected. This is very important.

America is going to change a lot in the next 8 years. When Al Gore says the best is—you ain't seen nothing yet, you may think that's just a campaign slogan. It might interest you to know that I actually believe that. We've spent a lot of time these last 8 years just trying to turn this country around. And it's like—it's why the *Titanic* hit the iceberg; you can't turn a big ocean liner around in a split second. And that's what a nation is like.

And now we've got it turned around. It's going in the right direction. And we, literally, are free to think about big things. We could get the country out of debt for the first time since Andrew Jackson was President. I mean, that's amazing, you know. Isn't it?

Now, it would require you to take a smaller tax cut, but it'll keep interest rates lower—one percent lower at least for a decade—the difference in the Republican and Democratic plans. You know what that's worth? Three hundred and ninety billion dollars in home mortgage reductions, alone—just in home mortgages, never mind the business loan, what it will do to the markets and all that.

So you need to do this, not for me, for you, for your kids, and your grandkids. Because anybody in this room tonight over 30 can remember at least one time in your life when you made a serious mistake, not because your life was going so badly but be-

cause things were going so well, you thought you didn't have to concentrate any more.

Now, anybody who's over 30 has made one of those mistakes. I mean a big one. [Laughter] Unless you've just been comatose, you've made a mistake like that. Now that's where we are. That's where the country is today. Are we going to grab a hold of this? Now, a lot of you said some very nice things, and Kenny Edmonds and his wife, Tracy, they've been real friends to me, and I appreciated him saying that I was for real. Whatever that means, that's what I've tried to be all right—for good or real.

I want to tell you something. I want to tell you what this means to me. You know, if Dick Gephardt were in the majority, we would have raised the minimum wage this year. You know what that would have meant? Ten million more people—10 million more people would be out there working and having greater dignity in their work and being rewarded for it. The richest time in the world, this Congress has not restored the minimum wage in real dollar terms to where it was 15, 16 years ago.

And if he had been the Speaker and we'd been the majority in the Senate, we'd have a Patients' Bill of Rights. You know, that sounds like a good thing, but 18 million people a year have their medical care either denied or delayed, even though the doctors want to give it to the patients because the insurance industry and the HMO's don't want to do it—18 million people. We're talking about real people here, 22 million people who have jobs because of the things we've done together, new jobs.

So you're talking about—when you hear people talking about this, there are millions of older people who need to be able to buy medicine. You know, if you live to be 65 in America, your life expectancy is 82. And the young women in this audience, because of the human genome discoveries—those of you who will have babies over the next 10 years, at least by the end of that cycle, your babies will be born with a life expectancy of about 90 years.

Now, that's the good news. But what are we going to do to make those years meaningful? How are we going to keep people healthy in those years? How are we going

to make those years not only living years but life-full years? And don't you think that somebody ought to be able to have good years, even if they're not rich when they turn 65? That's what this Medicare drug thing is all about.

You've got people out there, literally can't take medicine that has been prescribed for them without giving up what they had to spend on food today. So what I want you to understand is, these are big issues. One of the reasons that I want Al Gore to be elected is, in spite of all the people making fun of him and misrepresenting what he said about his role in the Internet, he understands the future, and he thinks about it.

All your medical records and your financial records are going to be on somebody's computer. Don't you think you ought to be able to say yes before somebody gets them? And if you get to say yes, how are we going to allow the Internet economy to continue to grow? Wouldn't you like somebody in the White House who understood that and thought about it all the time?

This is a magic moment. Believe me, the best stuff is still out there. And this is the last point I want to make. It's late, and I'm tired, and I'm jet-lagged. But I wanted to go back to what Kenny said, because Norm Mineta was riding with me up in northern California today, and he asked me why I did my politics the way I do, or how I came to be the way I am in public life.

And I said, "Well, when I was a little boy, I used to get on a bus two or three times a month and go about 80 miles down the road to my great uncle's house and sit out on the porch and listen to him talk. He had about a sixth grade education and about 180 IQ. And when I was a little boy, he used to say, 'Now, Bill, you just sit here, and when these people come up here, you listen to their stories, and you just remember everybody's got a story. And the poor man's story is about as good as a rich man's story and is not but a turn or two in life that makes a difference between one and the other.' And so I would sit there, year-in and year-out, and listen to that."

And then when I became old enough to run for public office, even when I started working in campaigns, I noticed that every

election, the people told their stories in slightly different ways, almost like there was a different song every 2 years or 4 years, always with the same theme, always using the same words, but the stories were always different.

All of you are in a unique position to make sure that this is an election devoted to America's stories being heard. If you look at all the differences between our party and the other party on all the issues, it basically comes down to this: We think everybody counts; everybody ought to have a chance; we all do better when we help each other. That's what we believe.

We believe that our independence as people depends upon recognizing our interdependence as people, that we are growing closer and closer together, that we have to reach across all the lines that divide us, that hate crimes are nutty hangovers from an earlier period where people were scared of those who were different from them or taught that they were somehow morally inferior, and that the truth is, America is the greatest place in the world today because it's the most diverse place in the world. That's what we believe.

We believe the role of Government is to give people a hand up who need it, to create the conditions and give people the tools to live their dreams. But mostly we believe we're so interdependent we need each other. And all I know is, those ideas, in practice, worked pretty well the last 8 years. It turns out that what is the right thing to do is also good economics, good social policy, good crime policy, good environmental policy.

But when you go home tonight, if somebody asks you why you're a Democrat, tell them that everybody counts; everybody deserves a chance; we all do better when we help each other; and everybody has a story.

And I will close with this. Two days ago I went to Flint, Michigan, a town I spent a lot of time in that's been very good to me. And there is a bunch of people from Flint, from Arkansas because in the forties and fifties, after the war, a lot of people in the South couldn't make a living off the land. And blacks and whites alike exploded out of there. A bunch of people came to California from

the South. A bunch of people even went back east to New York.

But in our part of the South, nearly everybody who left went to Illinois and Michigan. That's why I won those places in '92, when I ran for President. Those guys are still trying to figure out how I won those places. They don't understand. Every third voter was from Arkansas. It was easy. *[Laughter]*

So anyway, I go to Flint, which lost over half its auto employment. They went from 90,000 people working in the car plants to 35,000, and they've had to rebuild. So we put a community computer center in Flint, and Dick and I are trying to get the Congress now to approve funds to put a thousand of these across America, so that people even who don't have computers, whether they're children or older people—can at least come into these centers, at all hours of the day and night, and try to get hooked into the new world of the information economy.

The one in Flint is the best one in America that we know of for working with disabled Americans. And so I went to the center, and I saw the stuff. And then I spoke to this huge crowd of people with every conceivable disability and ability known to man. So I went in, and I saw this software program. And there was this blind woman feeding it into the computer in braille and pressing a button so it spoke back to her, and she knew that she had done the right thing. And there was a deaf person feeding it into the computer, and then it wrote back to her, so she knew it was real.

And then they took me to this laser technology made for people who are totally paralyzed or have Lou Gehrig's disease or something else that keeps you from moving anything but your eyes. And I learned how to turn lights on and off in a house, start the tape deck and hear the music. I even wrote "good morning" to the people who were with me with my eyes.

And the person there said, "You know, we get E-mails every week from a guy in North Carolina named Joe Martin who's got Lou Gehrig's disease." I said, "Yes, I know him." And I'm just going to tell you this one story, because we invest a lot to help people with disabilities access this technology. And remember, I think if they can do it and they

can live their stories, we're all better off. So here's Joe Martin's story.

When I met him 15 or 16 years ago, he was a very handsome man with a beautiful wife, who was North Carolina's representative on something called the Southern Growth Policies Board. And because I was the Governor of a southern State, we would meet and work together on how to develop jobs and education in the South. And of all the people I fool with from all the States that I worked with, I think I liked Joe Martin the best, which is sort of strange.

His brother was a chemistry professor who became the Republican Governor of North Carolina. I liked his brother, too. But you wouldn't expect that guy to be my favorite guy, but I liked him, because he was serious and he was full of energy. He was vital. He was charismatic. He was dynamic. He was constant motion. Fast forward 15 years, and he's got Lou Gehrig's disease, and he continues to go down, and he can't move.

So Joe Martin has lost all the things that I found most attractive, except the inner qualities, which have deepened. And he is a far more impressive man today than he was before.

And in about 2 months, Joe Martin will publish a book he wrote with his eyes. Every day he talks to his wife and children on that computer with his eyes. And he's still alive because he can say what he knows and what he feels to other people.

Now, I think it's a good thing that some of your tax money finances research into technologies like that and tries to spread it to other people and provides a center like that in Flint, where people can come who are disabled and get E-mails from—and he writes up there once a week. He E-mails them with his eyes. And when they know about Joe Martin, all those other people don't feel sorry for themselves anymore. I think that is a good thing.

So that's what I want to tell you. To me, this isn't very complicated. I believe that we are growing more and more and more interdependent. I believe in order to make the most of the modern world we live in and all these wonderful technologies, we have to understand that our enlightened self-interests requires us to try to make sure every

man and woman and boy and girl get to live their story, even if they have to do it with just their eyes. And I believe that the best is still out there. I nearly know the best is still out there if we make the right decisions. So thank you for being so nice to me. Thank you for all the things you said. Thank you for raising the \$4 million-plus. But remember, if every day the people in this room took a little time to make sure that everyone you know understood what was at stake and why they ought to stick with us, we'd have the celebration we want on election night, and most important, you'd have the future that your children deserve.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:44 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts Michael and Jena King; music producer David Foster; musician Richard Marx; actors Christian Slater and Rob Lowe; Representative Patrick J. Kennedy, chairman, Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee; Mike Honda, Adam Schiff, Janice Nelson, Jane Harman, and Gerrie Schipske, candidates for California's 15th, 27th, 28th, 36th, and 38th Congressional Districts, respectively; and musician Kenneth Edmonds, popularly known as Babyface, and his wife, Tracy. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Reception for Representative Lois Capps in Pacific Palisades, California September 24, 2000

The President. Thank you.

Audience member. Four more years! Four more years!

The President. In your dreams. [*Laughter*] No way!

The amazing thing is that Susan and Ted should be surprised that I would want to come to their backyard. I would be happy to come next Sunday, too. [*Laughter*] Is this a gorgeous place or what? I mean, amazing.

I want to thank you both for having us here and supporting one of the finest people I've ever known in public life. And I know when you have a family and your Sundays are precious, and I thank you for giving us this time and making it possible for all of us to come.

I want to thank all of you for being here. I thank Representatives Becerra and Sherman for coming to support Lois, and I thank Senator O'Connell and Kathleen Connell for being here. And mostly I just want to thank all of you for being here.

I want to say just a few words about Representative Capps. I got a little choked up when she started talking about my relationship with her family. I loved her husband very much. He was a special man, and we had a great rally in '96 in Santa Barbara and there were 15,000 or 20,000 people there with the Sun out and the ocean glistening, you know. And I thought we all were just going to levitate off the side of the world. [*Laughter*] If I had done that, it would have been the subject of another investigation. [*Laughter*] "How did he do that? What was behind that? What mysterious foreign entity financed that levitation?" [*Laughter*]

And Laura, who is standing back there, did work in the White House for many years, and she worked right behind my office, so I saw her several times a day, and she was one of the true, good souls in the White House. She kept everybody in a good frame of mind, and you couldn't act small around her, not only because she's physically big, but because she's big inside, just like her mother.

So, I'm honored to be here. But I also want to emphasize what Lois said. Now, I have worked harder in this election, I think, than any other one I've ever been in, although it's the first time in 26 years I haven't been on the ballot. [*Laughter*] This is something like the 140th campaign event I've done this year. And I've done these things for individual House Members and Senators and for a Senate and House committee and for the National Democratic Committee, which basically benefits directly Al Gore and Joe Lieberman. And of course, I've made a little extra effort in New York—[*laughter*—]where I have more than a passing interest in the outcome of the race. [*Laughter*]

The new joke around the White House is that, now that my party has a new leader and my family has a new candidate, my title should be changed to Cheerleader in Chief, and I'm quite happy with that. But I want